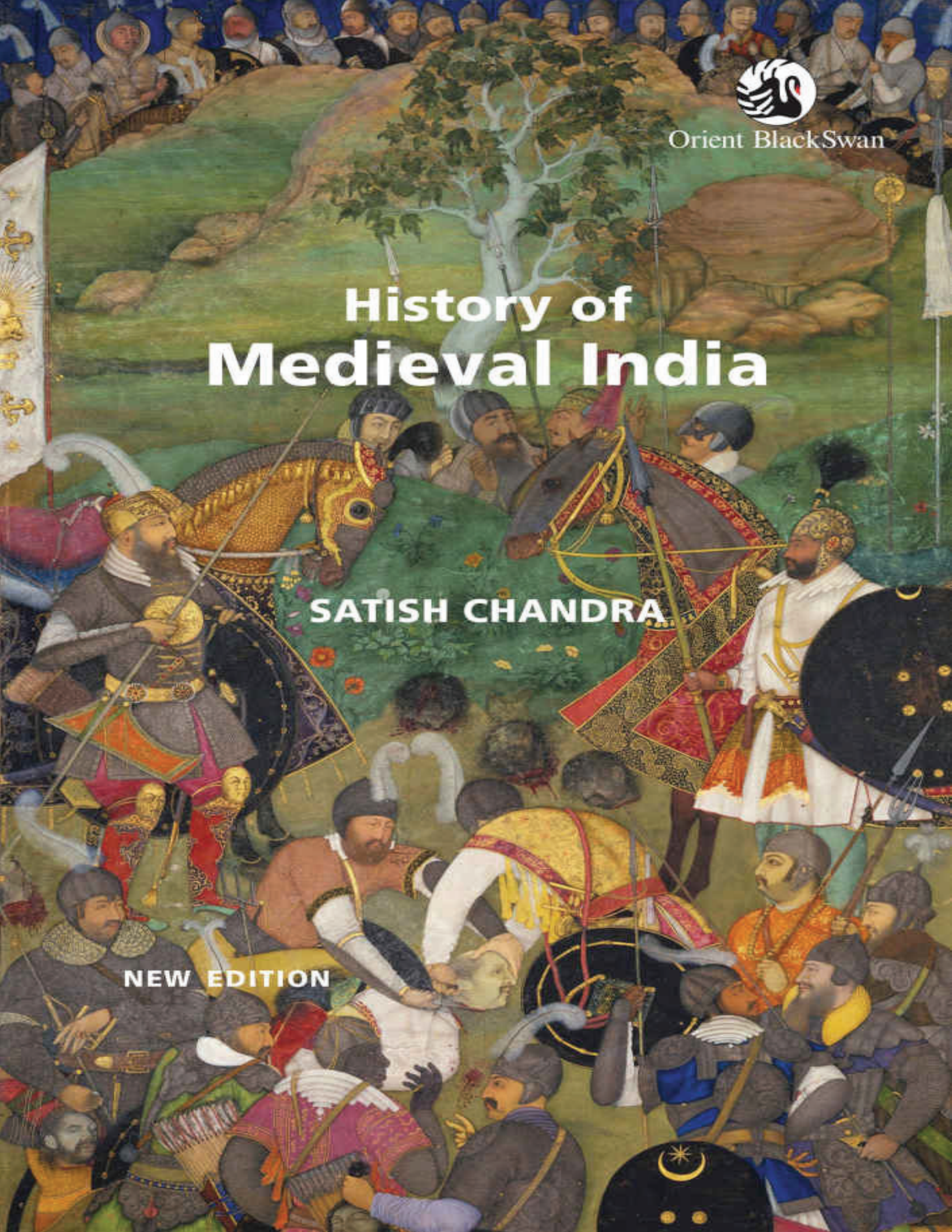
Orient BlackSwan
History of
Medieval India
SATISH CHANDRA
NEW EDITION

History of Medieval India (800–1700)

SATISH CHANDRA

Orient BlackSwan

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Maps
© Government of India, Copyright 2017.
The responsibility for the correctness of internal details rests with the publisher.
The territorial waters of India extend into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line.
The external boundaries and coastlines of India agree with the Record/Master Copy certified by the Survey of India.
The spellings of names in these maps have been taken from various sources.

Contents

Appendix

Books for Further Reading (Select List)

List of Maps

Appendix

Preface

As a nation grows, it is bound to review its past to see what part of its legacy is relevant, or an inhibiting factor, for growth. The medieval period of Indian history has often been equated to the period of Turkish and Mughal rule over the country. This meant that primacy was given to political factors rather than societal ones. This attitude was also based on the assumption that there has been little change in Indian society down the centuries. This attitude has now begun to change. Historians have traced the evolution of tribe-based society in India to the rise of territorial states, and the gradual formation of classes and castes within this state system. It has also been shown that with the growing trend towards ownership of land, and the desire to dominate and control those engaged in cultivation, a new form of society arose—that is, the feudal mode. It has, however, been recognized that there were vital differences between this social order and the feudal order in Europe.

Without trying to investigate these differences in detail, an attempt has been made to trace the evolution of social, economic, political and cultural trends in India from the eighth century to the end of the seventeenth century. It is a daunting task to bring all these aspects together in a single volume. An attempt has been made in the hope that the summation of the efforts of many historians during the past four decades to give a new orientation to medieval Indian history would stimulate public interest, and also put in better perspective recent controversies regarding the nature of the state in medieval India, the extent of religious freedom given to peoples within it, and the nature of economic growth during the period.

A point has been made in the book that the emergence of large empires, followed by their breakdown into smaller components and vice versa, did not necessarily mean economic stagnation and cultural decay. Even when larger states emerged subsequently, there was often an active interchange between the new centre and the regional states.

Thus, Indian history is not just an endless story of the rise and fall of empires without any institutional and cultural growth, as Sir Charles Elliot had postulated in his introduction to the eight-volume *History of India as Told by its Own Historians.* Indian history is a much more complex web, with the centre of gravity shifting from north to east, or to the south, and back again, and finally, for a long period, the forces of growth triumphing under the Mughals over the forces of disintegration. The process of disintegration during the eighteenth century, and a re-integration under vastly different circumstances under the British and its harmful consequences, have not been touched upon here.

In the end, I would like to thank Orient Longman for bringing out this work, despite many difficulties.

Satish Chandra
New Delhi
January 2007

One

India and the World

The 1,000-year period between the eighth and the eighteenth century saw important changes in India and the world. New social and political forms rose in Europe as well as Asia. The new forms also had profound effects on the thinking and living patterns of the peoples. These changes had an impact on India also, since India had long-standing trade and cultural relations with countries around the Mediterranean Sea, and the various empires which arose in the area, including the Roman and Persian empires.

Europe

In Europe, the mighty Roman empire had broken into two by the third quarter of the sixth century. The western part, with its capital at Rome, had been overwhelmed by the Slav and Germanic tribesmen coming from the side of Russia and Germany. These tribes came in many waves, and indulged in a great deal of ravaging and plundering in the territories of the old Roman empire. But, in course of time, these tribes settled down in different parts of Europe, profoundly changing the character of the old population as well as the languages and pattern of governments. The foundations of many of the modern European nations were laid during this period as a result of the commingling of these tribesmen with the local population.

The eastern part of the old Roman empire had its capital at Byzantium or Constantinople. This empire, called the Byzantine empire, included most of eastern Europe as well as modern Turkey, Syria and North Africa, including Egypt. It continued many of the traditions of the Roman empire, such as a strong monarchy and a highly centralized administration. However, in belief and ritual, it had many differences with the Catholic Church in the West, which had its headquarters at Rome. The church in the East was called the Greek Orthodox Church. It was due to its efforts and those of the Byzantine rulers that Russia was converted to Christianity. The Byzantine empire was a large and flourishing empire which continued to trade with Asia after the collapse of the Roman empire in the West. It created traditions of government and culture, many of which were later absorbed by the Arabs when they overran Syria and Egypt. It also acted as a bridge between the Greco-Roman civilization and the Arab world, and later helped in the revival of Greek learning in the West. It disappeared finally in the middle of the fifteenth century when Constantinople fell to the Turks.

For centuries after the collapse of the Roman empire in the West, the cities virtually disappeared in western Europe. One cause of this was the absence of gold, which the Romans had obtained from Africa and used for trade with the Orient. The period between the

sixth and tenth centuries was for long called a ‘Dark Age’ by historians. However, this was also a period of agricultural expansion which prepared the way for the revival of city life from the tenth century, and the growth of foreign trade. Between the twelfth and the fourteenth century, western Europe was again able to attain a high level of prosperity. A notable feature of the period was the growth of science and technology, growth of towns, and the establishment of universities in a number of cities, such as Padua and Milan in Italy. The universities played an important part in the growth of new learning and new ideas, which were gradually to lead to the Renaissance and the rise of a new Europe.

Growth of Feudalism

A new type of society and a new system of government rose in western Europe, following the breakup of the Roman empire. The new order that gradually emerged is called feudalism. This is derived from the Latin word *feudum*, which in English became fief. In this society the most powerful elements were the chiefs who, with their military following, dominated large tracts of land and also played an important part in government. The king was just like one of the more powerful feudal chiefs. In course of time, the monarchy became stronger and an attempt was made to limit the power of the chiefs, who constantly fought each other, leading to a state of social anarchy. One method of controlling this was through the king swearing the chiefs to an oath of loyalty to him as his vassals, and, in return, recognizing the tract of land dominated by the chiefs as their fiefs. The chiefs, in turn, could appoint sub-chiefs as vassals, and allot a tract out of their fief to them. The king could, in theory, resume the fief of a disloyal vassal, but, in practice, this was rarely done. Thus, in the feudal system, government was dominated by a landed aristocracy. The aristocracy soon became hereditary and tried its best not to admit outsiders to its fold. But it was never a completely closed aristocracy, with disloyal chiefs being removed and new ones being appointed, or rising to power.

The feudal system is associated with two other features. First is the system of serfdom. A serf was a peasant who worked on the land

but could not change his profession, or migrate to any other area or marry without the permission of his lord or master. Associated with this system was the manor. The manor was the house or castle where the lord lived. In many of the European countries, large tracts of land were owned by the lords of these manors. A part of the land was cultivated by the lord directly with the help of serfs, who had to divide their time between cultivating their own fields and the fields of their master. The land belonged theoretically to the lord, and the serf had to pay him other dues in cash and kind. The lord of the manor also had the responsibility for maintaining law and order, dispensing justice, etc. Since there was a great deal of lawlessness in those days, even free peasants were sometimes prepared to accept the vassalage of the lord of the manor in return for protection.

Some historians think that the system of serfdom and the manor system are vital parts of feudalism, and that it is wrong to speak of feudalism for societies in which these two did not exist. In India, for instance, there was no serfdom and no manor system as such. But the local landed elements (*samantas*) exercised many of the powers of the feudal lords, and the peasantry was in a dependent position to them. In other words, what mattered was not whether the peasantry was formally free, but the manner and the extent to which it could exercise its freedom. In many countries of western Europe, the manor system, and the system of labour dues by the peasants disappeared after the fourteenth century.

The second feature associated with the feudal system in Europe is the system of military organization. The most typical symbol of the feudal system was the armoured knight on horseback. Actually, the system of cavalry warfare can roughly be traced back in Europe only to the eighth century. In the Roman times, the chief wings of the army were the heavy and light infantry, armed with long spears and short swords. Horses were used to draw chariots in which the officers rode. It is generally believed that the mode of warfare changed with the arrival of the Arabs. The Arabs had a large supply of horses and their swift movements and mounted archers made the infantry largely ineffective. The problem of developing and maintaining the organization needed for the new mode of warfare

helped in the growth of feudalism in Europe. No king could hope to maintain out of his own resources the large body of cavalry that was needed, and to provide them with armour and equipment. Hence, the army was decentralized, assigning to the fief-holders the responsibility for maintaining a fixed force of cavalry and infantry for the service of the king.

Cavalry warfare became the principal mode of warfare on account of two inventions which, though much older, began to be used on a large scale during this period. The first was the iron stirrup. The iron stirrup made it possible for a heavily armoured person to sit firmly on a horse without falling off. It also made possible a cavalry charge with lances held tightly to the body, without the rider being thrown off by the shock of the impact. The earlier device was either a wooden stirrup or a piece of rope, which only provided a toe-hold. Another invention was a new type of harness which enabled a horse to draw twice the amount of load it pulled earlier. It is believed that both these inventions came to Europe from the East, possibly from East Asia. They spread in India from the tenth century onwards.

Thus, many factors, political, economic and military, were responsible for the growth of feudalism in Europe. Even when stronger governments emerged after the eleventh century, the tradition had become too strong for the king to reduce easily the power of the feudal chiefs.

Apart from the system of feudalism, the pattern of life in Europe during what is called the medieval period was also shaped by the Christian Church. We have already referred to the role of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Byzantine empire and in Russia. In the absence of a powerful empire in the West, the Catholic Church took on some of the functions of the government as well. The Pope, who was the head of the Catholic Church, became not only a religious head, but also a figure who exercised a great deal of political and moral authority. In Europe, as in West Asia and in India, the Medieval Age was an age of religion, and those who spoke on behalf of religion exercised a great deal of power and influence. With the help of grants of land from the princes and feudal chiefs, and donations from rich merchants, many monastic orders and monasteries were

set up. Some of these orders, such as that of the Franciscans, served the needy and the poor. Many monasteries gave medical help, or shelter to the travellers. They also served as centres for education and learning. In this way, the Catholic Church played an important role in the cultural life of Europe.

However, some of the monasteries which became exceedingly wealthy began to behave like feudal lords. This led to internal discord, and conflict with the rulers, who resented the worldly power of the Church and of the Popes. This conflict was reflected in the Renaissance and Reform movements later on.

The Arab World

The rise of Islam from the seventh century onwards was instrumental in uniting the warring Arab tribes into a powerful empire. The Arab empire founded by the early caliphs embraced, apart from Arabia, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Egypt, North Africa and Spain.

Following internal differences and civil war among the Arab tribes, in the middle of the eighth century the caliph at Damascus was displaced, and a new dynasty called the Abbasids came to power. They set up their capital at the newly founded city of Baghdad. The Abbasids claimed to belong to the same tribe to which the Prophet Muhammad belonged, and were for that reason considered holy. For about 150 years, the Abbasid empire was one of the most powerful and flourishing empires in the world. At its height, it included all the important centres of civilization in the area, viz., parts of North Africa, Egypt, Syria, Iran and Iraq. The Abbasids controlled not only some of the most important regions of West Asia and North Africa, but also commanded the important trade routes linking the Mediterranean world with India. The safety and security which the Abbasids provided to these trade routes was an important factor for the wealth and prosperity of the people in the area, and for the splendour and magnificence of the Abbasid court. The Arabs were keen merchants and quickly emerged as the most enterprising and wealthy merchants and seafarers in the world during the period. Numerous cities, with magnificent buildings, both private and public, arose. The standard of living and the cultural environment of the Arab towns could hardly be paralled in any country in the world during the period. The Arabs also established the gold *dinar* and the silver *dirham*, which became the currency of trade all over the world. This was made possible by the Arab access to African gold. The Arabs also established double entry book-keeping, advanced accountancy, and large-scale and elaborate banking and credit, including bills of exchange (*hundis*).

The most famous caliphs of this period were al-Mamun and Harun al-Rashid. The splendour of their court and their palaces, and of their patronage to men of science and learning, became the subjects of

numerous stories and legends. During the early period, the Arabs displayed a remarkable capacity for assimilating the scientific knowledge and administrative skills of the ancient civilizations they had overrun. For managing the administration, they had no hesitation in employing non-Muslims, such as Christians and Jews, and also non-Arabs, particularly the Iranians, many of whom were Zoroastrians or even Buddhists. Although the Abbasid caliphs were orthodox Muslims, they opened wide the gates of learning from all quarters, as long as it did not challenge the fundamental tenets of Islam. The Caliph al-Mamun set up a 'House of Wisdom' (*bait-ul-hikmat*) at Baghdad for translating into Arabic the learning from various civilizations—Greek, Byzantine, Egyptian, Iranian and Indian. The example set by the Caliphs was followed by individual nobles. In a short space of time, almost all the important scientific works of the various countries had become available in Arabic. We know a good deal about the impact of Greek science and philosophy on the Arabs, largely due to the work done in recent years by a devoted band of European scholars. We are also beginning to have a better idea of the impact of Chinese science and philosophy on the Arab world. Many Chinese inventions, such as the compass, paper, printing, gun-powder and even the humble wheel-barrow travelled from China to Europe via the Arabs during this period. The famous Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, travelled to China in order to know more about it, and to breach the Arab monopoly on Europe's trade with China.

Unfortunately, we have only a limited knowledge of India's economic and cultural relations with the Arab world during the period, and India's scientific contribution to it. After its conquest by the Arabs in the eighth century, Sindh did become a conduit of scientific and cultural links between India and the Arab world. The decimal system, which is the basis of modern mathematics and which had developed in India in the fifth century, travelled to the Arab world during this period. During the ninth century it was popularized in the region by the Arab mathematician al-Khwarizmi. It was introduced to Europe in the twelfth century by a monk, Abelard, and became known as the system of Arab numerals! Many Indian works

dealing with astronomy and mathematics were also translated into Arabic. The famous work on astronomy, *Surya Siddhanta*, which had been revised and reformed by Aryabhatta, was one of these. Works of Charak and Sushruta dealing with medicine were also translated. Indian traders and merchants continued to visit the marts of Iraq and Iran, and Indian physicians and master-craftsmen were received at the caliph's court at Baghdad. A number of Sanskrit literary works, such as *Kalila wa Dimma* (*Panchatantra*) were also translated into Arabic and formed the basis of *Aesop's Fables* in the West. A more detailed study of the impact of Indian sciences and philosophy on the Arab world and of the Arab sciences on India is now being made.

By the beginning of the tenth century, the Arabs had reached the stage when they could make their own contribution to the various sciences. The growth of geometry, algebra, geography, astronomy, optics, chemistry, medicine, etc., in the Arab world during this period made it the leader in the field of science. The writings of Arab geographers and their maps advanced knowledge about the world. The Arabs also helped to develop new devices for travelling across the open sea. These devices continued to be used till the fifteenth century. The accounts of the Arab traders about India and the neighbouring countries during this period are useful sources of information for us.

Some of the best-stocked libraries in the world and the leading scientific laboratories were established in the Arab world during the period. However, it is necessary to remember that many of these achievements were the result of work done by people outside Arabia, in Khurasan, Egypt, Spain, etc. Arab science was truly international. It has been called Arab science because Arabic was the language of literature and thought in the entire area, and people from various countries could move freely and work or settle down anywhere they liked. The remarkable degree of intellectual and personal freedom enjoyed by scientists and scholars as well as the patronage extended to them was an important factor in the remarkable growth of Arab science and civilization. Such freedom was not available in Europe at that time due to the rigid attitude of the church. Perhaps conditions in India were similar, for hardly any of

the Arab sciences could filter into India, and the growth of Indian science slowed down during the period.

Arab science began to decline after the twelfth century partly due to political and economic developments affecting the area, but even more on account of the growing orthodoxy which stifled free thought. But it continued to grow in Spain until the fourteenth century.

Africa

The Arabs also brought Africa more closely into the Indian Ocean and Middle Eastern trade. Arab migrations and mercantile activity along the east coast of Africa increased enormously, extending up to Malindi, Zanzibar, etc. However, the Arab trade included the large-scale export of slaves, as also gold, ivory, etc. There was in Africa a powerful Ethiopian kingdom of long standing, which had many towns. The Ethiopians were engaged in the Indian Ocean trade across Aden to India. The Ethiopians, called Habshis, were Christians. They were closely allied to the Byzantine empire in the Indian Ocean trade. Their economic position weakened with the decline of the Byzantine empire.

East And Southeast Asia

China's society and culture had attained new heights in the eighth and ninth centuries under Tang rule. The Tang rulers extended their overlordship over large parts of Sinkiang in Central Asia, including Kashgar. This helped in giving a fillip to the overland trade across what is called the Silk Road. Not only silk, but fine quality porcelain and works in jade—a semi-precious stone—were also exported to West Asia, Europe and India across this road. Foreign traders were welcome in China. Many of them—Arabs, Persians and Indians—came to South China across the land and the seas, and settled down in Canton.

The Tang empire declined in the middle of the ninth century, and was replaced in the tenth century by another dynasty, the Sung, which ruled over China for about 100 years. Its growing weakness gave an opportunity to the Mongols to conquer China in the thirteenth century. The Mongols wrought great death and destruction in China. But due to their highly disciplined and mobile cavalry forces, the Mongol rulers were able to unify north and south China under one rule for the first time. For some time, they also brought under their sway Tonkin (north Vietnam) and Annam (south Vietnam). In the north, they overran Korea. Thus, the Mongols established one of the largest empires in East Asia.

The Venetian traveller, Marco Polo, who spent some time at the court of Kublai Khan, the most famous of the Mongol rulers of China, has left a picturesque account of his court. Marco Polo returned to Italy by sea, visiting Malabar in India on the way. Thus, already different parts of the world were coming closer together, and their commercial and cultural contacts were increasing.

The countries of Southeast Asia had to meet the expansionist urges of some of the Chinese rulers, China having developed a strong navy by this time. But during most of the time, the Southeast Asian states remained independent. The two most powerful kingdoms which flourished in the region during the period were the Sailendra and Kambuja empires.

The Sailendra dynasty, which arose in the eighth century and

constituted the Sri Vijaya empire, flourished till the tenth century. At its height, the empire included Sumatra, Java, the Malaya peninsula, parts of Siam (modern Thailand) and even the Philippines. According to a ninth-century Arab writer, the empire was so large that even the fastest vessel could not complete a round trip of it in two years. The Sailendra rulers had a powerful navy, and dominated the sea trade to China. The Sri Vijaya empire was replaced by the Majapahit empire in the eleventh century. It further extended the limits of the Sri Vijaya empire and continued till the fourteenth century. The Pallavas of south India also had a powerful navy. The Pallava navy was especially active in the Bay of Bengal. The sea trade with the countries of Southeast Asia and China was so important that in the tenth century, a Chola ruler sent a series of naval expeditions to Sumatra and Malaya to keep the sea lanes of communication open. Since the early centuries of the Christian era and even before, India had close trade and cultural contacts with the countries of the area. Many Chinese and Indian scholars visited Palembang, the capital of the empire, which was located in Sumatra, and which had been a Sanskrit and Buddhist centre of study even earlier. The rulers built magnificent temples during the period, the most famous of them being the temple of Borobodur in east Java, dedicated to the Buddha. It is a whole mountain carved into nine stone terraces, surmounted by a stupa. Indian epics, such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, are displayed in the panels of the temple. These epics continued to provide the themes for literature, folk-art, puppet-plays, etc.

The Kambuja empire extended over Cambodia and Annam (south Vietnam) and replaced the Hinduized kingdom of Funan which had dominated the area earlier. The Kambuja empire flourished till the fifteenth century and attained a high level of cultural development and prosperity. Its most magnificent achievement may be considered the group of temples near Ankor Thom in Cambodia. Begun in the tenth century, each ruler built a new temple there to commemorate his memory, till about 200 temples were built in an area of 3.2 square kilometres. Of these, the largest is the temple of Ankor Wat. It has three kilometres of covered passages containing beautiful statues of

Hindu gods, goddesses and nymphs (*apsaras*), and skillfully executed panels containing scenes from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. This entire group of buildings had been completely forgotten by the outside world and been largely taken over by the jungle, till it was 'discovered' by a Frenchman in 1860. It is interesting to note that the most vigorous period of temple-building activity was the period from the tenth to the twelfth century, which also saw the most magnificent period of temple-building activity in India.

Many Indian traders went to south China after travelling overland from the port of Takkala in the Malaya peninsula to the South China Sea. Many brahmans, and later Buddhist monks settled in countries of Southeast Asia and in south China. Buddhism travelled from China to Korea and Japan. Indian monks reached Korea and influenced the evolution of a Korean script close to the Indian one. While Buddhism declined in India, in course of time, it continued to flourish in Southeast Asia. In fact, it assimilated the Hindu gods into the Buddhist fold, and even took over the Hindu temples—a movement opposite to what was happening in India at that time.

Thus, India had close commercial and cultural contacts with the West, Southeast Asia, China, and also Madagascar and countries on the east coast of Africa. The various kingdoms in Southeast Asia acted as a kind of a bridge for commercial and cultural contacts between India and China, and the outside world. Though deeply influenced by Indian civilization and culture, they were able to attain a distinctive culture of their own of a very high order. Arab traders, who had been trading with south India and with the countries of Southeast Asia earlier, became even more active after the establishment of the Abbasid empire. But the Arabs did not displace the Indian traders and preachers. In the early phase, they did not make any special effort to convert the people of the area to Islam. Thus, a remarkable degree of religious freedom and tolerance, and the commingling of various cultures marked these countries, a characteristic they have retained even today. The conversion of Indonesia and Malaya to Islam took place gradually, after Islam had consolidated its position in India. Elsewhere, Buddhism continued to

flourish. Commercial and cultural contacts between India and these countries were snapped only with the establishment of the Dutch rule in Indonesia, the English rule in India, Burma and Malaya, and later, the French rule in Indo-China.

Two

Northern India: Age of the Three Empires (*800–1000*)

After the decline of Harsha's empire in the seventh century, a number of large states arose in north India, the Deccan and south India. Unlike the Gupta and Harsha's empire in north India, none of the other kingdoms in north India were able to bring the entire Ganga valley under its control. The Ganga valley, with its population and other resources, was the basis on which the Gupta rulers and Harsha had been able to extend their control over Gujarat which, with its rich sea ports and manufacturers, was important for overseas trade. Malwa and Rajasthan were the essential links between the Ganga valley and Gujarat. This defined the geographical limits of an empire in north India. In south India, the Cholas were able to bring the Krishna, Godavari and the Kaveri deltas under their control. This was the basis of their supremacy in south India.

Large states arose in north India and the Deccan between AD 750 and 1000. These were the Pala empire, which dominated eastern India till the middle of the ninth century; the Pratihara empire, which dominated western India and the upper Gangetic valley till the middle of the tenth century; and the Rashtrakuta empire, which dominated the Deccan and also controlled territories in north and south India at various times. Each of these empires, although they fought among themselves, provided stable conditions of life over large areas, extended agriculture, built ponds and canals, and gave patronage to arts and letters, including temples. Of the three, the Rashtrakuta empire lasted the longest. It was not only the most powerful empire of the time, but also acted as a bridge between north and south India in economic as well as in cultural matters.

The Struggle for Domination in North India: The Palas

The period following the death of Harsha was a period of political confusion. For some time, Lalitaditya, the ruler of Kashmir, brought the Punjab under his control and even controlled Kanauj which, since the days of Harsha, was considered the symbol of the sovereignty of north India—a position which Delhi was to acquire later. Control of Kanauj also implied control of the upper Gangetic valley and its rich resources in trade and agriculture. Lalitaditya even invaded Bengal or Gaud, and killed its reigning king. But his power waned with the rise of the Palas and the Gurjara-Pratiharas.

The Palas and the Pratiharas clashed with each other for control of the area extending from Banaras to south Bihar, which again had rich resources and well-developed imperial traditions. The Pratiharas also clashed with the Rashtrakutas of the Deccan.

The Pala empire was founded by Gopala, probably in AD 750 when he was elected king by the notable men of the area to end the anarchy prevailing there. Gopala was not born in a high, much less a royal family, his father probably being a soldier. He unified Bengal under his control, and even brought Magadha (Bihar) under his control. Gopala was succeeded in AD 770 by his son, Dharmapala, who ruled till AD 810. His reign was marked by a tripartite struggle between the Palas, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas for the control of Kanauj and north India. The Pratihara ruler advanced upon Gaud (Bengal), but before a decision could be taken, he was defeated by the Rashtrakuta ruler, Dhruva, and was forced to seek refuge in the deserts of Rajasthan. Dhruva then returned to the Deccan. This left the field free for Dharmapala, who occupied Kanauj and held a grand darbar attended by vassal rulers from Punjab, eastern Rajasthan, etc. We are told that the rule of Dharmapala extended up to the furthest limit of India in the northwest and perhaps included Malwa and Berar. Apparently, this implied that the rulers of these areas accepted the suzerainty of Dharmapala.

The triumphal career of Dharmapala may be placed between AD 790 and 800. Dharmapala could not, however, consolidate his power in north India. The Pratihara power revived under Nagabhatta II.

Dharmapala fell back, but was defeated near Mongyr. Bihar and modern east Uttar Pradesh remained a bone of contention between the Palas and the Pratiharas. However, Bihar, in addition to Bengal, remained under the control of the Palas for most of the time.

Failure in the north compelled the Pala rulers to turn their energies in other directions. Devapala, the son of Dharmapala, who succeeded to the throne in AD 810 and ruled for 40 years, extended his control over Pragjyotishpur (Assam) and parts of Orissa. Probably a part of modern Nepal was also brought under Pala suzerainty.

Thus, for about 100 years, from the middle of the eighth to the middle of the ninth century, the Pala rulers dominated eastern India. For some time, their control extended up to Varanasi. Their power is attested to by an Arab merchant, Sulaiman, who visited India in the middle of the ninth century, and wrote an account of it. He calls the Pala Kingdom Ruhma (or Dharma, short for Dharmapala), and says that the Pala ruler was at war with his neighbours, the Pratiharas and the Rashtrakutas, but his troops were more numerous than his adversaries. He tells us that it was customary for the Pala king to be accompanied by a force of 50,000 elephants, and that 10,000–15,000 men in his army were employed 'in fulling and washing clothes'. Even if these figures may be exaggerated, we can assume that the Palas had a large military force at their disposal. But we do not know whether they had a large standing army, or whether their forces consisted largely of feudal levies. Information about the Palas is also provided to us by Tibetan chronicles, although these were written in the seventeenth century. According to these, the Pala rulers were great patrons of Buddhist learning and religion. The Nalanda university, which had been famous all over the eastern world, was revived by Dharmapala, and 200 villages were set apart for meeting its expenses. He also founded the Vikramasila university, which became second only to Nalanda in fame. It was located on the top of a hill, on the banks of the Ganga in Magadha, amidst pleasant surroundings. The Palas built many *viharas* in which a large number of Buddhist monks lived.

The Pala rulers also had close cultural relations with Tibet. The

noted Buddhist scholars, Santarakshita and Dipankara (called Atisa), were invited to Tibet, and they introduced a new form of Buddhism there. As a result, many Tibetan Buddhists flocked to the universities of Nalanda and Vikramasila for study. Although the Palas were supporters of Buddhism, they also extended their patronage to Saivism and Vaishnavism. They gave grants to large numbers of brahmans from north India who flocked to Bengal. Their settlements helped in the extension of cultivation in the area, and the transformation of many pastoralists and food-gatherers who settled down to cultivation. The growing prosperity of Bengal helped in extending trade and cultural contacts with countries of Southeast Asia—Burma, Malaya, Java, Sumatra, etc.

The trade with Southeast Asia was very profitable and added greatly to the prosperity of the Pala empire and led to the incursion of gold and silver from these countries into Bengal. The powerful Sailendra dynasty, which was Buddhist in faith and which ruled over Malaya, Java, Sumatra and the neighbouring islands, sent many embassies to the Pala court and sought permission to build a monastery at Nalanda, and also requested the Pala ruler, Devapala, to endow five villages for its upkeep. The request was granted and bears testimony to the close relations between the two empires.

The Pratiharas

The Pratiharas, who ruled over Kanauj for a long time, are also called Gurjara-Pratiharas. Most scholars believe that they originated from the Gurjaras, who were pastoralists and fighters, like the Jats. The Pratiharas established a series of principalities in central and eastern Rajasthan. They clashed with the Rashtrakutas for the control of Malwa and Gujarat, and later for Kanauj, which implied control of the upper Ganga valley. The Pratiharas, who first had their capital at Bhinmal, gained prominence under Nagabhatta I, who offered stout resistance to the Arab rulers of Sindh who were trying to encroach on Rajasthan, Gujarat, the Punjab, etc. The Arabs made a big thrust towards Gujarat, but were decisively defeated by the Chalukyan ruler of Gujarat in 738. Although small Arab incursions continued, the Arabs ceased to be a threat thereafter.

The efforts of the early Pratihara rulers to extend their control over the upper Ganga valley and Malwa were defeated by the Rashtrakuta rulers Dhruva and Gopal III. In 790 and again in 806–07, the Rashtrakutas defeated the Pratiharas and then withdrew to the Deccan, leaving the field free for the Palas. Perhaps the main interest of the Rashtrakutas was the domination of Malwa and Gujarat. The real founder of the Pratihara empire and the greatest ruler of the dynasty was Bhoja. We do not know much about the early life of Bhoja, or when he ascended the throne. He rebuilt the empire, and by about AD 836 had recovered Kanauj, which remained the capital of the Pratihara empire for almost a century.

Bhoja tried to extend his sway in the east, but he was defeated and checkmated by the Pala ruler, Devapala. He then turned towards central India and the Deccan and Gujarat. This led to a revival of the struggle with the Rashtrakutas. In a sanguinary battle on the banks of the Narmada, Bhoja was able to retain his control over considerable parts of Malwa, and some parts of Gujarat. But he could progress no further in the Deccan. Hence, he turned his attention to the north again. According to an inscription, his territories extended to the western side of the river Sutlej. Arab travellers tell us that the Pratihara rulers had the best cavalry in India. Import of

horses from Central Asia and Arabia was an important item of India's trade at that time. Following the death of Devapala and the weakening of the Pala empire, Bhoja also extended his empire in the east.

The name of Bhoja is famous in legends. Perhaps the adventures of Bhoja in the early part of his life, his gradual reconquest of his lost empire, and his final recovery of Kanauj struck the imagination of his contempories. Bhoja was a devotee of Vishnu, and adopted the title of 'Adivaraha', which has been found inscribed in some of his coins. He is sometimes called Mihir Bhoja to distinguish him from Bhoja Paramara of Ujjain, who ruled a little later.

Bhoja probably died in about 885. He was succeeded by his son, Mahendrapala I. Mahendrapala, who ruled till about 908–09, maintained the empire of Bhoja and extended it over Magadha and north Bengal. His inscriptions have also been found in Kathiawar, east Punjab and Awadh. Mahendrapala fought a battle with the king of Kashmir, but had to yield to him some of the territories in the Punjab won by Bhoja.

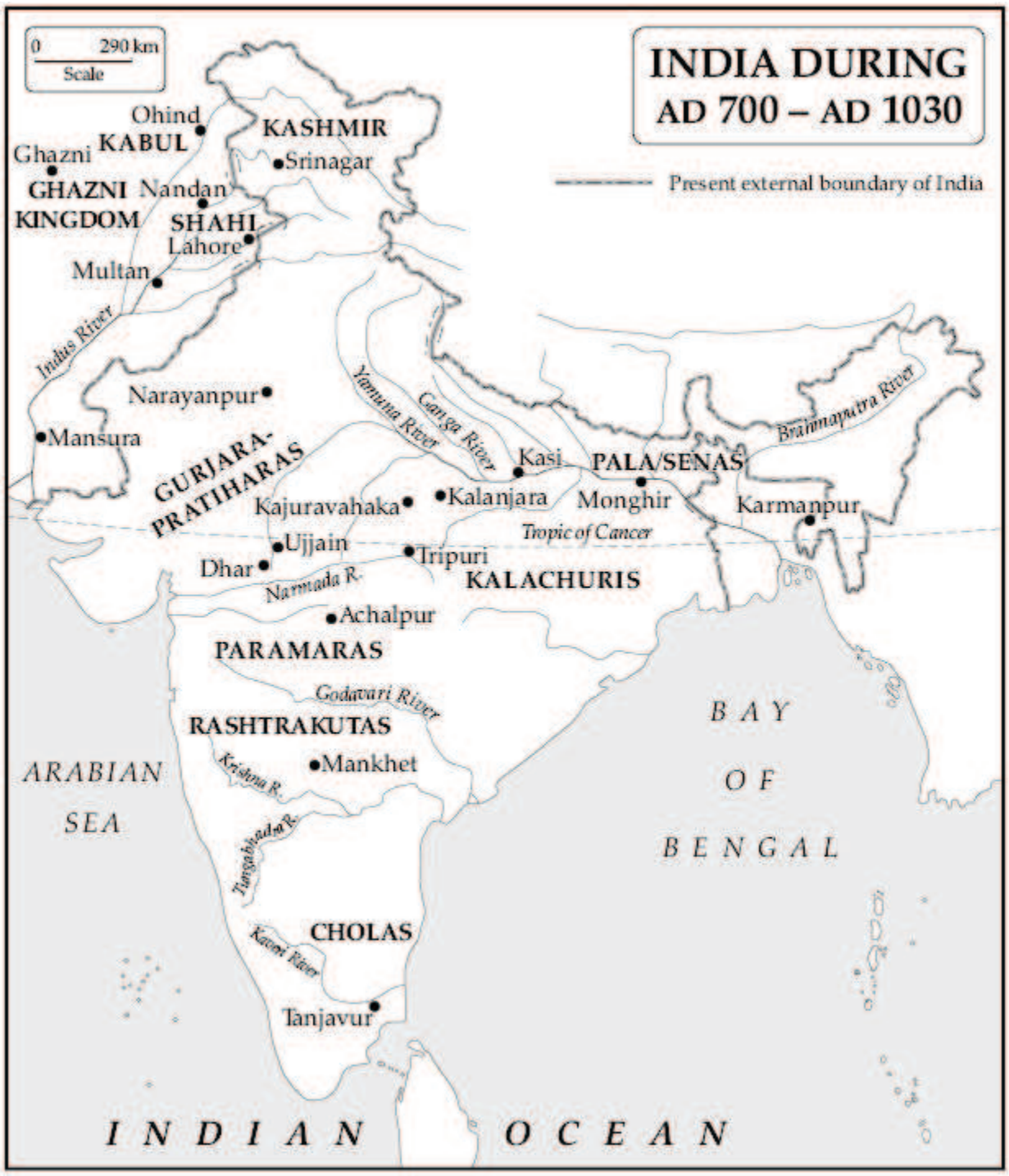
The Pratiharas thus dominated north India for over 100 years, from the early ninth to the middle of the tenth century. Al- Masudi, a native of Baghdad, who visited Gujarat in 915–16, testifies to the great power and prestige of the Pratihara rulers and the vastness of their empire. He calls the Gurjara-Pratihara kingdom al-Juzr (a corrupt form of Gurjara), and the king Baura, probably a mispronounciation of Adivaraha, the title used by Bhoja, although Bhoja had died by that time. Al-Masudi says that the empire of Juzr had 1,80,000 villages, cities and rural areas, and was about 2,000 km in length and 2,000 km in breadth. The king's army had four divisions, each consisting of 7,00,000 to 9,00,000 men: 'with the army of the north he fights against the ruler of Multan and other Muslims who align themselves with him.' The army of the south fought against the Rashtrakutas, and that of the east against the Palas. He had only 2000 elephants trained for war, but the best cavalry of any king in the country.

The Pratiharas were patrons of learning and literature. The great Sanskrit poet and dramatist, Rajashekhar, lived at the court of

Mahipala, a grandson of Bhoja. The Pratihara also embellished Kanauj with many fine buildings and temples.

During the eighth and ninth centuries, many Indian scholars went with embassies to the court of the caliph at Baghdad. These scholars introduced Indian sciences, especially mathematics, algebra and medicine, to the Arab world. We do not know the names of the Indian kings who sent these embassies. The Pratiharas were well-known for their hostility to the Arab rulers of Sindh. Despite this, it seems that the movement of scholars and goods between India and West Asia continued even during this period.

Between 915 and 918, the Rashtrakuta king, Indra III, again attacked Kanauj, and devastated the city. This weakened the Pratihara empire, and Gujarat probably passed into the hands of the Rashtrakutas, for al-Masudi tells us that the Pratihara empire had no access to the sea. The loss of Gujarat, which was the hub of the overseas trade and the main outlet for north Indian goods to West Asian countries, was another blow to the Pratiharas. Another Rashtrakuta ruler, Krishna III, invaded north India in about 963 and defeated the Pratihara ruler. This was followed by the rapid dissolution of the Pratihara empire.


INDIA DURING
AD 700 – AD 1030
0 290 km
Scale
Present external boundary of India
Ohind
KABUL
KASHMIR
Srinagar
Ghazni
GHAZNI
KINGDOM
Nandan
SHAHI
Lahore
Multan
Indus River
Narayanpur
Mansura
GURJARA-
PRATIHARAS
Yamuna River
Ganga River
Kasi
PALA/SENAS
Brahmaputra River
Kajuravahaka
Kalanjara
Monghir
Karmanpur
Tropic of Cancer
Ujjain
Dhar
Narmada R.
Tripuri
KALACHURIS
Achalpur
PARAMARAS
Godavari River
RASHTRAKUTAS
Mankhet
Krishna R.
Tungabhadra R.
CHOLAS
Kaveri River
Tanjavur
ARABIAN
SEA
BAY
OF
BENGAL
INDIAN OCEAN

The Rashtrakutas

While the Palas and the Pratiharas were ruling over north India, the Deccan was being ruled by the Rashtrakutas, a remarkable dynasty which produced a long line of warriors and able administrators. The kingdom was founded by Dantidurga, who set up his capital at Manyakhet or Malkhed near modern Sholapur. The Rashtrakutas soon dominated the entire area of northern Maharashtra. They also engaged with the Pratiharas for the overlordship of Gujarat and Malwa, as we have seen above. Although their raids did not result in the extension of the Rashtrakuta empire to the Ganga valley, they brought rich plunder, and added to the fame of the Rashtrakutas. The Rashtrakutas also fought constantly against the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi (in modern Andhra Pradesh) and in the south against the Pallavas of Kanchi and the Pandyas of Madurai.

Probably the greatest Rashtrakuta rulers were Govinda III (793–814) and Amoghavarsha (814–878). After a successful expedition against Nagabhatta of Kanauj and the annexation of Malwa, Govinda III turned to the south. We are told in an inscription that Govinda 'terrified the Kerala, Pandya and the Chola kings and caused the Pallavas to wither. The Ganga (of Karnataka), who became dissatisfied through baseness, were bound down with fetters and met with death.' The king of Lanka and his minister, who had been negligent of their own interests, were captured and brought over as prisoners to Halapur. Two statues of the lord of Lanka were carried to Manyakhet, and installed like pillars of victory in front of a Siva temple.

Amoghavarsha ruled for sixty-four years but by temperament he preferred the pursuit of religion and literature to war. He was himself an author and is credited with writing the first Kannada book on poetics. He was a great builder, and is said to have built the capital city Manyakhet so as to excel the city of Indra.

There were many rebellions in the far-flung Rashtrakuta empire under Amoghavarsha. These could be barely contained, and began afresh after his death. His grandson, Indra III (915–927), re-established the empire. After the defeat of Mahipala and the sack of

Kanauj in 915, Indra III was the most powerful ruler of his times. According to al-Masudi who visited India at that time, the Rashtrakuta king, Balhara or Vallabharaja, was the greatest king of India and most of the Indian rulers accepted his suzerainty and respected his envoys. He possessed large armies and innumerable elephants.

Krishna III (934–963) was the last in a line of brilliant rulers. He was engaged in a struggle against the Paramaras of Malwa and the eastern Chalukyas of Vengi. He also launched a campaign against the Chola ruler of Tanjore, who had supplanted the Pallavas of Kanchi. Krishna III defeated the Chola king, Parantaka I (949), and annexed the northern part of the Chola empire. He then pressed on to Rameshwaram and set up a pillar of victory there and built a temple. After his death, all his opponents united against his successor. The Rashtrakuta capital, Malkhed, was sacked and burnt in 972. This marked the end of the Rashtrakuta empire.

The Rashtrakuta rule in the Deccan thus lasted for almost 200 years, till the end of the tenth century. The Rashtrakuta rulers were tolerant in their religious views and patronised not only Saivism and Vaishnavism, but Jainism as well. The famous rock-cut temple of Siva at Ellora was built by one of the Rashtrakuta kings, Krishna I, in the ninth century. His successor, Amoghavarsha, is said to have been a Jain, but he also patronised other faiths. The Rashtrakutas allowed Muslim traders to settle, and permitted Islam to be preached, in their dominions. We are told that the Muslims had their own headman, and had large mosques for their daily prayers in many of the coastal towns in the Rashtrakuta empire. This tolerant policy helped to promote foreign trade, which enriched the Rashtrakutas.

The Rashtrakuta kings were great patrons of arts and letters. In their courts, we find not only Sanskrit scholars, but also poets and others who wrote in Prakrit and in the *apabhramsha*, the so-called corrupt languages which were the fore-runners of the various modern Indian languages. The great *apabharamsha* poet, Svayambhu, and his son probably lived at the Rashtrakuta court.

Political Ideas and Organization

The system of administration in these empires was based on the ideas and practices of the Gupta empire, Harsha's kingdom in the north, and the Chalukyas in the Deccan. As before, the monarch was the centre of all affairs. He was the head of the administration as well as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. He sat in a magnificent darbar. Squadrons of infantry and cavalry were stationed in the courtyard. Captured war-elephants and horses were paraded before him. He was attended by royal chamberlains, who regulated the coming and going of vassal chiefs, feudatories, ambassadors, and other high officials who regularly waited on the king. The king also dispensed justice. The court was not only a centre of political affairs and justice, but cultural life as well. Dancing girls and skilled musicians attended the court. Women of the King's household also attended the darbar on festive occasions. In the Rashtrakuta empire, according to Arab writers, women did not veil their faces.

The king's position was generally hereditary. Thinkers of the time emphasized absolute loyalty and obedience to the king because of the insecurity of the times. Wars were frequent between kings, and between kings and their vassals. While kings strove to maintain law and order within their kingdoms, their arms rarely extended far enough. Vassal rulers and autonomous chiefs often limited the area of the direct administration of the king, although the kings adopted high-sounding titles such as *Maharajadiraj param-bhattaraka*, etc., and claimed to be *chakravartin*, or supreme, of all Indian rulers. A contemporary writer, Medhatithi, thinks that it was the right of an individual to bear arms in order to defend himself against thieves and assassins. He also thinks that it was right to oppose an unjust king. Thus, the extreme view of royal rights and privileges, put forward mainly in the *Puranas*, was not accepted by all the thinkers.

The rules about succession were not rigidly fixed. The eldest son often succeeded, but there are many instances when the eldest son had to fight his younger brothers, and sometimes lost to them. Thus, the Rashtrakuta rulers Dhruva and Govinda IV deposed their elder brothers. Sometimes, rulers designated the eldest son or another

favourite son as their Yuvaraj or successor. In that case, the Yuvaraj stayed at the capital and helped in the task of administration. Younger sons were sometimes appointed provincial governors. Princesses were rarely appointed to government posts, but we do have an instance when a Rashtrakuta princess, Chandrobalabbe, a daughter of Amoghavarsha I, administered the Raichur doab for some time.

Kings were generally advised by a number of ministers. The ministers were chosen by the king, generally from leading families. Their position was often hereditary. Thus, in the case of the Pala kings, we hear that a brahmana family supplied four successive chief ministers to Dharmapala and his successors. In such cases, the minister could become very powerful. Although we hear of a number of departments of the central government, we do not know how many of them there were and how they worked. From epigraphic and literary records, it appears that in almost every kingdom, there was a minister of correspondence, which included foreign affairs, a revenue minister, treasurer, chief of the armed forces (*senapati*), chief justice, and *purohita.* More than one post could be combined in one person, and perhaps one of the ministers was considered the chief or the leading minister on whom the king leaned more than the others. All the ministers, except the *purohita*, were expected to lead military campaigns as well when called upon to do so. We also hear of officials of the royal household (*antahpur*). Since the king was the fountainhead of all power, some of the officers of the household became very powerful.

The armed forces were very important for the maintenance and expansion of the empire. We have already cited evidence from Arab travellers that the Pala, Pratihara and Rashtrakuta kings had large and well-organised infantry and cavalry, and a large number of war-elephants. Elephants were supposed to be elements of strength and were greatly prized. The largest number of elephants was maintained by the Pala kings. Large numbers of horses were imported both by Rashtrakuta and Pratihara kings by sea from Arabia and West Asia, and over land from Khurasan (east Persia) and Central Asia. The Pratihara kings are believed to have had the

finest cavalry in the country. There are no references to war-chariots, which had fallen out of use. Some of the kings, especially the Rashtrakutas, had a large number of forts. They were garrisoned by special troops, and had their own independent commanders. The infantry consisted of regular and irregular troops, and of levies provided by the vassal chiefs. The regular troops were often hereditary and sometimes drawn from different regions all over India. Thus, the Pala infantry consisted of soldiers from Malwa, Khasa (Assam), Lata (south Gujarat) and Karnataka. The Pala kings, and perhaps the Rashtrakutas, had their own navies, but we do not know much about their strength and organization.

The empires consisted of area administered directly and areas ruled over by the vassal chiefs. The latter were autonomous as far as their internal affairs were concerned, and had a general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute and supplying the quota of troops to the overlord. Sometimes, a son of a vassal chief was required to stay in attendance to the overlord to guard against rebellion. The vassal chiefs were required to attend the darbar of the overlord on special occasions, and sometimes they were required to marry one of their daughters to the overlord or to one of his sons. But the vassal chiefs always aspired to be independent and wars between them and the overlord were frequent. Thus, the Rashtrakutas had to fight constantly against the vassal chiefs of Vengi (Andhra) and Karanataka; the Pratiharas had to fight against the Paramaras of Malwa and the Chandellas of Bundelkhand.

The directly administered territories in the Pala and Pratihara empires were divided into *bhukti* (provinces), and *mandala* or *visaya* (districts). The governor of a province was called *uparika* and the head of a district, *visayapati.* The *uparika* was expected to collect land revenue and maintain law and order with the help of the army. The *visayapati* was expected to do the same within his jurisdiction. During the period, there was an increase in smaller chieftains, called *samantas* or *bhogapatis,* who dominated over a number of villages. The *visayapatis* and these smaller chiefs tended to merge with each other, and later on the word *samanta* began to be used indiscriminately for both of them.

In the Rashtrakuta kingdom, the directly administered areas were divided into *rashtra* (provinces), *visaya* and *bhukti*. The head of *rashtra* was called *rashtrapati*, and he performed the same functions as the *uparika* did in the Pala and Pratihara empires. The *visaya* was like a modern district, and the *bhukti* was a smaller unit. In the Pala and Pratihara empires, the unit below the *visaya* was called *pattala*. The precise role of these smaller units is not known. It seems that their main purpose was the realization of land revenue and some attention to law and order. Apparently all the officials were paid through grants of rent-free land. This tended to blur the distinction between local officials and the hereditary chiefs and smaller vassals. Similarly, the *rashtrapati* or governor sometimes enjoyed the status and title of a vassal king.

Below these territorial divisions was the village. The village was the basic unit of administration. The village administration was carried on by the village headman and the village accountant whose posts were generally hereditary. They were paid by grants of rent-free lands.

The headman was often helped in his duties by the village elders, called *grama mahajana* or *grama mahattara.* In the Rashtrakuta kingdom, particularly in Karnataka, we are told that there were village committees to manage local schools, tanks, temples and roads. They could also receive money or property in trust, and manage them. These sub-committees worked in close cooperation with the headman and received a percentage of the revenue collection. Simple disputes were also decided by these committees. Towns had similar committees, to which the heads of trade guilds were also associated. Law and order in the towns and in areas in their immediate vicinity was the responsibility of the *koshta pala* or *kotwal* —a figure made familiar through many stories.

An important feature of the period was the rise in the Deccan of hereditary revenue officers called *nad gavundas* or *desa gramakutas.* They appear to have discharged the same functions as the deshmukhs and deshpandes of later times in Maharashtra. This development, along with the pettry chieftainships in north India which we have just mentioned, had an important bearing on society and politics. As the power of these hereditary elements grew, the village

committees became weaker. The central ruler also found it difficult to assert his authority over them and to control them. This is what we mean when we say that the government was becoming ‘feudalised’.

Another point to bear in mind is the relationship of state and religion during the time. Many of the rulers of that time were devout followers of Siva or Vishnu, or they followed the teachings of Buddhism or Jainism. They made handsome donations to the Brahmans, or the Buddhist *viharas* or the Jain temples. But, generally, they offered patronage to all the faiths, and did not persecute anyone for his or her religious beliefs. Muslims were also welcomed and allowed to preach their faith by the Rashtrakuta kings. Normally, a king was not expected to interfere with the customs, or with the code of conduct prescribed by the law books called the *Dharmashastras*. But he did have the general duty of protecting Brahmans and maintaining the division of society into four states or *varnas.* The *purohita* was expected to guide the king in this matter. But it should not be thought that the *purohita* interfered with state affairs or dominated the king. Medhatithi, the foremost expounder of *Dharmashastra* in this period, says that the king’s authority was derived both from the *Dharmashastras*, including the *Vedas*, and from *Arthashastra* or the science of polity. His public duty or *rajadharma* was to be based on the *Arthshastra*, that is, on principles of politics. This really meant that politics and religion were, in essence, kept apart, religion being essentially a personal duty of the king. Thus, the kings were not dominated by the priests, or by the sacred law expounded by them. Religion was, however, important for legitimizing and strengthening the position of the rulers. Many of the rulers therefore built grand temples, often at their capitals, and gave handsome land-grants for the maintenance of the temples and to the Brahmans.

Three

South India: The Chola Empire (*900–1200*)

Powerful kingdoms had risen in south India during the sixth and eighth centuries. The most important among them were the Pallavas and the Pandyas who dominated modern Tamil Nadu, the Cheras of modern Kerala, and the Chalukyas who dominated the Maharashtra area or the Deccan. It was the Chalukyan king, Pulakesin II, who had defeated Harsha and not allowed him to expand his kingdom towards the Deccan. Some of these kingdoms, such as the Pallava and Pandya, had strong navies. They also played an important role in strengthening economic, religious and cultural relations with the countries of Southeast Asia, and with China. Their navies enabled them to invade and rule some parts of Sri Lanka for some time.

The Chola empire which arose in the ninth century brought under its control a large part of the peninsula. The Cholas developed a powerful navy which enabled them to conquer Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Its impact was felt even by the countries of Southeast Asia. The Chola empire may be said to mark a climax in south Indian history.

The Rise of the Chola Empire

The founder of the Chola empire was Vijayalaya, who was at first a feudatory of the Pallavas. He captured Tanjore in AD 850. And by the end of the ninth century, the Cholas had defeated both the Pallavas of Kanchi (Tondaimandalam) and weakened the Pandyas, bringing the southern Tamil country under their control. But the Cholas were hard put to defend their position against the Rashtrakutas. As we have noted in a previous chapter, Krishna III defeated the Chola king, and annexed the northern part of the Chola empire. This was a serious setback to the Cholas, but they rapidly recovered, particularly after the death of Krishna III in 965 and the downfall of the Rashtrakuta empire.

Age of Rajaraja and Rajendra I

The greatest Chola rulers were Rajaraja (985–1014) and his son Rajendra I (1014–1044). Rajaraja destroyed the Chera navy at Trivandrum, and attacked Quilon. He then conquered Madurai and captured the Pandyan king. He also invaded Sri Lanka and annexed its northern part to his empire. These moves were partly motivated by his desire to bring the trade with the Southeast Asian countries under his control. The Coromandel coast and Malabar were the centres for India's trade with the countries of Southeast Asia. One of his naval exploits was the conquest of the Maldives. Rajaraja annexed the northwestern parts of the Ganga kingdom in Karnataka, and overran Vengi.

Rajendra had been appointed heir apparent in his father's life-time, and had considerable experience in administration and warfare before his accession to the throne. He carried forward the annexationist policy of Rajaraja by completely overrunning the Pandya and Chera countries and including them in his empire. The conquest of Sri Lanka was also completed, with the crown and royal insignia of the king and the queen of Sri Lanka being captured in a battle. Sri Lanka would be unable to free herself from Chola control for another fifty years.

Rajaraja and Rajendra I marked their victories by erecting a number of Siva and Vishnu temples at various places. The most famous of these was the Brihadishwara temple at Tanjore, which was completed in 1010. The Chola rulers adopted the practice of having inscriptions written on the walls of these temples, giving a historical narrative of their victories. That is why we know a great deal more about the Cholas than their predecessors.

One of the most remarkable exploits in the reign of Rajendra I was the march across Kalinga to Bengal, in which the Chola armies crossed the river Ganga, and defeated two local kings. This expedition, which was led by a Chola general, took place in 1022 and followed in reverse the same route which the great conqueror Samudragupta had followed. To commemorate this occasion, Rajendra I assumed the title of Gangaikondachola ('the Chola who

conquered the Ganga'). He built a new capital near the mouth of the Kaveri river and called it Gangaikondacholapuram ('the city of the Chola who conquered the Ganga').

An even more remarkable exploit in the time of Rajendra I were the naval expeditions against the revived Sri Vijaya empire. The Sri Vijaya empire, which had been revived in the 10th century, extended over the Malay peninsula, Sumatra, Java and the neighbouring islands, and controlled the overseas trade route to China. The rulers of the Sailendra dynasty of the Sri Vijaya kingdom were Buddhists and had cordial relations with the Cholas. The Sailendra ruler had built a Buddhist monastery at Nagapatnam and, at his instance, Rajendra I had endowed a village for its upkeep. The cause of the breach between the two apparently was the Chola eagerness to remove obstacles to Indian traders, and to expand trade with China.

The expeditions led to the conquest of Kadaram or Kedah and a number of other places in the Malay peninsula and Sumatra. The Chola navy was the strongest in the area, and for some time the Bay of Bengal was converted into a ‘Chola lake’.

The Chola rulers also sent a number of embassies to China. These were partly diplomatic and partly commercial. Chola embassies reached China in 1016 and 1033. A Chola embassy of 70 merchants reached China in 1077 and, according to a Chinese account, received ‘81,800 strings of copper-cash’, that is, more than four lakhs of rupees in return for the articles of ‘tribute’ comprising ‘glass-ware, camphor, brocades, rhinoceros horns, ivory, etc.’ Tribute was the word used by the Chinese for all articles brought for trade.

The Chola rulers fought constantly with the Chalukyas who had succeeded the Rashtrakutas. These are called the later Chalukyas and their capital was at Kalyani. The Cholas and the later Chalukyas clashed for the overlordship of Vengi (Rayalaseema), the Tungabhadra doab, and the Ganga-ruled country in northwest Karnataka. Neither side was able to gain a decisive victory in this contest and ultimately it exhausted both the kingdoms. It also appears that the wars were becoming harsher during this time. The Chola rulers sacked and plundered Chalukyan cities including Kalyani, and massacred the people, including Brahmans and children. They adopted a similar policy in the Pandya country, settling military colonies to overawe the population. They destroyed Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of the rulers of Sri Lanka, and treated their king and queen harshly. These are blots in the history of the Chola empire. However, once they had conquered a country, the Cholas tried to set up a sound system of administration in it. One of the remarkable features of the Chola administration was their encouragement to local self- government in the villages all over their empire.

The Chola empire continued to flourish during the twelfth century, but it declined during the early part of the thirteenth century. The later Chalukyan empire in the Maharashtra area had also come to an end during the twelfth century. The place of the Cholas was taken by the Pandyas and the Hoysalas in the south, and the later Chalukyas were

replaced by the Yadavas and the Kakatiyas. All these states extended patronage to arts and architecture. Unfortunately, they weakened themselves by continually fighting against each other, sacking the towns and not even sparing the temples. Ultimately, they were destroyed by the sultans of Delhi at the beginning of the fourteenth century.